



**Baltimore City Children and Youth Fund
Report to Mayor and City Council
March/April 2019
(Submitted June 3, 2019)**

This report covers the months of March and April. The events that occurred and work performed in March had direct implications on the workload in April. The Year 1 BCYF grant cycle runs from September 1, 2018 – August 31, 2019 and there are 84 grantees.

Grantee Reporting

As noted in earlier reports to City Hall, the deadline for grantees to submit their first quarter report was extended from December 31, 2018 to January 31, 2019 to give grantees more time to navigate the online grant tool and seek assistance from the BCYF team as needed. These reports covered activities which occurred between September 1 – November 30, 2018 and is comprised of both a programmatic and a financial component. The BCYF team had reviewed all Q1 reports by mid-March, except for the handful of grantees that did not submit a report. The majority of financial reports required revisions and were sent back to grantees with instructions on how to correct the deficiencies. As a reminder, the first disbursement checks were dated November 2, 2018 or later, depending on the date the grantee reached compliance (compliance included background checks and appropriate insurances in place), leaving little time for grantees to spend money. (A total of 28 checks were disbursed that month, with 24 occurring on November 30, 2018.) Most of the rejected reports reflected little to no spending. The majority of grantees struggled to transfer their budget into the finance report correctly and required one-to-one assistance to make the revisions.

The second quarter reports, covering activities between December 1, 2018 – February 28, 2019, were due March 31, 2019. The majority of grantees had received their first disbursement by this time. Given the number of Q1 reports that required revisions, the handful of grantees who submitted a Q1 report along with their Q2 report, the increased spending of grantees resulting in more complex financial reports, and the departure of a team member who reads the reports, BCYF was inundated with work in late March and April. Adding to the time crunch, grantees with awards of \$250,000 or less were due for their second and final disbursement on April 11, provided they met the compliance requirements. This standard required an approved Q1 and Q2 report.

Noticeably, more than 70 percent of grantees turned in the Q2 report on time and several grantees requested an extension before the deadline. The programmatic narratives in the report were stronger this quarter, reflecting the work of the technical assistance (TA) consultants. Very fee grantees worked with their TA consultant before submitting their Q1 report and the BCYF team strongly encouraged grantees to have their TA review the Q2 report before submitting. Additionally, most

grantees had working capital and were able to fully implement their program, resulting in progress toward their metrics.

Grantees are asked to share their challenges and successes in the quarterly reports. Some common patterns and themes emerged across the portfolio:

- **Recruitment:** The delay in initial funding – most often caused by grantees’ challenges around insurance – continues to have a negative impact. Grantees with access to other funding were able to recruit students for programs at the beginning of the school year and were further along in their metrics. Grantees heavily dependent upon BCYF funding were more likely to struggle with student recruitment. Youth and young adults may have been eager to participate in September/October 2018 but as the months passed, they moved on to other programs or lost interest. As a result, these programs had fewer participants than grantees originally intended and the progress toward achieving metrics was slow. This pattern is particularly noticeable among grassroots organizations with limited capacity. The technical assistance (TA) consultants have begun supporting grantees in this area and the grantees have expressed a desire to collaborate in order to help one another achieve success.
- **Attendance:** Consistent attendance and commitment to programs leads to better outcomes for youth and young adults. Understandably, family commitments and school activities may sometimes conflict with the program calendar. Some grantees have reported, however, that parents/guardians will prevent youth from attending programs as punishment for poor grades or misbehavior. For programs that are curriculum-based with lessons that build on one another, these gaps in attendance have negative consequences. It makes it difficult for the grantees to plan when they don’t have a consistent attendance and of course impacts their metrics. It’s also disruptive because they are trying to help youth catch up while the rest of the group is moving forward. This can cause youth to become frustrated and impact their commitment to the program. Some programs have also lost youth due to transitions in their living arrangements.
- **School schedule:** Grantees with a history of working with Baltimore City Schools typically leave room in their program to account for snow days, holidays, professional development days, etc. when school will be closed. Newer programs were less likely to have consulted the school calendar and then were surprised by the number of days schools were closed. The TA consultants have been working with grantees to adjust their timelines to factor in the school calendar and plan for unexpected closures due to weather or other disruptions.
- **Storytelling:** Grantees’ success stories have been inspiring and BCYF looks forward to the opportunity to share more of them publicly. Media coverage and a couple of excerpts are included at the end of this report. When speaking with grantees about their programs, however, the BCYF team and TA consultants have discovered additional successes and key learnings that grantees have not reflected in their reports. The grantees could use support around storytelling and the various ways outside of metrics to show impact.

The grantees’ biggest challenge continues to be financial reporting. The majority of grantees have not been required to complete the level of detailed reporting associated with public funding. The BCYF financial report requires receipts for purchased items, invoices and copies of canceled checks, a record of employees and volunteers receiving a stipend or paycheck and their role, hours worked, etc.

More than two-thirds of the 84 grantees needed to make revisions in their Q2 financial reports and several of those grantees still had not addressed the requested revisions from the Q1 report. Some revised reports were rejected a second time because there were still errors, including not submitting receipts. Given the volume of the work, the number of reports requiring revisions, and capacity challenges because the financial reviewer was also tied up with the City's audit of the Fund, the process of approving reports has been slow which means the disbursement process has been slow. (See **Miscellaneous/Grantee Disbursements** on page 4 for details.) The BCYF team prioritized for review grantees whose Q1 reports were approved and the Q2 report was turned in on time. These organizations tended to be well-established with a history of receiving grant funds and/or fiscally sponsored by one of the major fiscal sponsors in the city.

TA Update

Over the last 30-60 days, the TA consultants have had an opportunity to see their assigned grantees' build momentum in their programs. Grantees generally fall into one of three groups: organizations that require a few touches and check-ins, organizations that want to grow their capacity and utilize their TA as a thought partner, and organizations that benefit from regular support with daily operations and compliance. The TA consultants spent March and April balancing those varying needs and, in some cases, explaining and defining their role to their assigned grantees. Despite multiple conversations with grantees about the purpose of TA, a number of organizations did not view the consultant as a partner and problem solver but rather another set of eyes focused on compliance. (Though the TA team consults with the administrative team, the roles are very different). As a result, some grantees had not been forthcoming with their TA consultant about challenges. The BCYF team realized that grantees are receiving a lot of information and often are focused on their most immediate need, which is typically day-to-day operations and funding. The TA consultants fill a critical need in helping to manage relationships with 84 organizations and communicating messages that grantees may miss when their focus is elsewhere.

The TA consultants also spent March and April on the following:

- Providing general programmatic support based on best practices: Some grantees have been operating programs for years but lack codified policies and procedures, such as taking attendance. The TAs continued to work with grantees to further refine their metrics and create evaluation plans to measure impact. TA consultants often meet grantees on location to observe the program and gain a better understanding of how the program operates, number of youth who are in attendance, activities offered, etc. (These are not compliance site visits.)
- Revising budgets: Grantees may have shifted their timelines due to the timing of the first disbursement and/or may have experienced other changes that impact their spending. Any line item change greater than 10 percent must be approved by BCYF. Changes under 10 percent still have an impact on the overall budget, and TAs are encouraged to work with grantees to ensure they remain within the grant award. An example of a budget revision may be that a grantee was able to secure in-kind donations and can now repurpose that money. Some TA consultants have also been able to assist grantees with revising their financial reports, though this is not in their scope of work.
- Sharing opportunities: Grantees are eager to collaborate and share knowledge and opportunities with one another. The BCYF team does not have the capacity to manage these

communications. The TA consultants have helped disseminate information about other grants, free and reduced-cost trainings and professional development to one another, which trickles out to the entire portfolio.

BCYF/ABC determined that the depth and breadth of grantees’ struggles with financial reporting required a dedicated TA specialist to assist grantees with the process. This TA consultant is an accountant familiar with the systems at ABC and also has experience working with grassroots organizations operating with public funding. Holding one-to-one meetings with grantees at their office, where they keep their receipts, has been the most effective way to support them with completing the reports. This will ideally reduce the amount of time the administrative team spends reviewing reports that need revisions.

Miscellaneous

Grantee Disbursements:

All grantees received their first disbursement after they signed their contract, completed the background checks and secured the required insurance. Five of the 84 grantees still have not received their initial disbursement. Four of those programs are grassroots organizations with awards of \$20,000 or less.

The disbursement schedule then follows this plan:

LEVEL(S)	PAYMENT
1, 2, 3	October 26, 2018*
3	February 11th
1, 2	April 11th
3	June 10th

***Note:** Grant disbursements are contingent upon grantees meeting all conditions of Compliance **and** ABC receiving BCYF funds from the City of Baltimore. The first disbursement is contingent upon grantees meeting the background checks and insurance requirements. Reports are due December 31, 2018, March 31, 2019, June 30, 2019 and September 30, 2019.

Six grantees follow the Level 3 schedule. The remaining 78 grantees follow the schedule for Levels 1 and 2. As of April 30, 2019, the status was as follows:

- Level 3: Five grantees have received their first and second disbursement. The remaining organization had not submitted their revised Q1 report by April 30 and had not received a second disbursement.
- Levels 1 and 2: Nineteen grantees received their second and final disbursement as of April 30.

Site Visits:

BCYF contacted all 84 programs in April to set up site visits. TA providers have been visiting programs throughout the grant cycle but these are related to compliance. Visits document the location of the program, number of youth served and activities conducted, and are compared against the original application. Grantees have been inviting the BCYF team to events and activities throughout the grant cycle and are typically eager to host the site visits. A handful of programs have already completed their activities and BCYF is documenting their existence through pictures and videos posted on social media and/or letters from parents confirming their child's involvement and activities they witnessed.

Non-Awardee Feedback Meetings:

The BCYF team conducted approximately 35 one-to-one feedback sessions in March and April with applicants who were unsuccessful in the first year of the Fund. Non-awardees were provided with overall feedback about the portfolio in general, including common themes from all applications and feedback from the grant panel specific to their proposal, along with scores.

BCYF will not continue to schedule these sessions due to team capacity and the availability of information released at the Community Feedback Meetings in January which typically applies to the majority of applications.

Success Stories:

Heart's Place Services was featured on WBAL in March 2019 for the work they are performing with BCYF funding: [Couple backs effort to provide homeless children with food-filled backpacks](#). Grantees are also sharing photos and videos of their programs on their social media sites. For example, BCYF grantee Humble Beast Movement, a music program for middle- and high-school students, announced it had its first signed artist in March 2019, a 15-year-old singer/songwriter. There will be an official signing party but BCYF does not have the capacity to track and promote these types of stories.

Audit:

The audit of the Youth Fund by Baltimore City is still underway.